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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7715  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

Turkish Cypriots Remove Controversial Footbridge in Nicosia  
All papers report Turkish Cypriot "President" Mehmet Ali Talat's office has announced Monday that the Lokmaci footbridge in the Turkish side near the Ledra buffer zone in the center of Nicosia will be dismantled despite objections from the Turkish military. Knocking down the bridge used by Turks is regarded as a first step toward opening "Ledra Street," the heart of the Nicosia commercial district. When open, it means Greek Cypriots will have access to Turkish shops.

Turkish Cypriot "Prime Minister" Ferdi Sabit Soyer has confirmed reports claiming tensions with the Turkish military in the footbridge controversy. Papers expect the crisis to deepen if Talat insists on opening the Lokmaci border crossing after the demolition of the footbridge, a military zone controlled by the Turkish troops in north Cyprus. Several organizations in the north have launched a campaign against Talat to block the demolition; however, television news reported today that work began Tuesday morning to take down the overpass. Talat had accepted a demand coming from President Papadopoulos to remove the footbridge for the opening of the bordergate, in an effort to see a breakthrough. The UN, EU and the US have been pleased by Talat's decision, say papers.

Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) said the administration of Turkish Cyprus was to make the final decision about the dismantling of the Lokmaci footbridge. Turkish Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek followed suit, and also said such goodwill efforts were needed to gain a better position. Papers speculate the Turkish government has supported the removal of the walkway, but objects to the opening of the border crossing. Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Yasar Buyukanit had said over the weekend that the military opposed dismantling the footbridge without a reciprocal gesture from the Greek Cypriot side.

Gul Due to Visit the US

Hurriyet, Sabah, Vatan, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report  
Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul is waiting for an appointment with Secretary Rice to visit the United States in February. While in the

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US, Gul will discuss with Rice Iraq after the execution of Saddam Hussein, the planned referendum in Kirkuk, and the PKK as well as Iran, Syria, and Lebanon. Zaman says Turkish General Staff (TGS) Chief General Yasar Buyukanit may also visit the US in February.

Meanwhile, Turkey's special Iraqi envoy Ambassador Oguz Celikkol said the PKK issue had a negative impact on Turkey's ties with the Iraqi Administration and with groups in northern Iraq. Celikkol said the Iraqi Interior Minister was expected to visit Turkey soon.

PM Erdogan: My Remarks on Countering PKK Terrorism Directed at US All papers: Speaking to the press following a meeting with the Association of Turkish Exporters, PM Erdogan emphasized his earlier remarks regarding the PKK coordination mechanism and said 'Our general [Turkish PKK Envoy Edip Baser] is fulfilling his duty. My remarks were an evaluation of the situation, and they were directed at the United States.' PM Erdogan stressed that the government is not considering renouncing the special envoy mechanism for countering the PKK terrorism.

Editorial Commentary on Iraqi Oil Legislation

Ridvan Akar writes in the leftist Birgun the Iraqi oil legislation reflects a "new style of colonialism and imperialism": "The recent hydrocarbon draft legislation waiting to be passed in the Iraqi parliament is a manifestation of a "naked emperor." The people of Iraq have not yet been informed about the law but it got approvals from the White House, the IMF, the World Bank and relevant American

ANKARA 00000040 002 OF 003

and British oil firms. Once again it shows that the attraction of Iraq for the US and UK was oil, nothing else. The information about the law was made available right after Saddam's death which brings an important piece of history to mind. Prior to the occupation, Saddam had made deals with French, Russian and Chinese oil companies for the country's oil. They were waiting for the UN to lift the embargo in order to start the oil business in which British and American giants would get nothing. Today, Iraq presents a lab for analysis, showing a new style of colonialism and imperialism in the 21st century."

Similarly, Mustafa Balbay comments in the nationalist-leftist Cumhuriyet: "Iraq is on the verge of two significant developments. President Bush is going to announce Washington's new Iraq policy and the Iraqi parliament is going to pass legislation to transfer all oil reserves to American and British companies. At the current stage, Iraqi democracy has turned into an oil democracy. This is a chain of events we all witnessed. It started with the occupation, was followed by a puppet administration and ends up with the passing of a colonial-like law by a so-called democratic parliament. In fact the new oil law is not news any more, because similar stories have appeared in the press repeatedly since 2003, since the US invasion of Iraq. Interestingly, those reports were denied both by Americans and Brits at that time. Their argument was that they were bringing democracy, introducing human rights and saving Iraq from a dictator. After 4 years, we can see the result: a democracy of allowing foreigners to loot the country!"

Kurdish Conference to be Held in Ankara on January 13-14

Sabah, Zaman: A two day conference organized by the Democratic Peace Initiative, to discuss Kurdish issue will be held in Ankara on January 13-14. Representatives of the academic world, media and politics are expected to participate at the conference. The primary aim of the gathering was described by the organizers as an intellectual effort to contribute to a peaceful and democratic solution for the Kurdish problem, and the denouncement of any kind of act of violence as means of a solution. President Sezer, Parliament Speaker Arinc and PM Erdogan have also been invited to express both personal and official views in sessions.

TV Highlights  
NTV, 6.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul is to participate in the January 24-28 World Economic Forum meetings in Davos.
- The Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit is expected to visit Turkey this week.
- The Turkish Health Ministry has taken new measures to cope with a possible bird flu pandemic.
- State Minister Kursad Tuzmen said Turkey is targeting USD 100 billion exports in 2007.

#### International News

- US State Department's Matt Bryza told a Turkish-American Council gathering that the US needs to do more for the elimination of the PKK presence in northern Iraq. He also said a healthy and secular democracy functioned in Turkey, underlining the fact that the ruling AKP had been elected to power by the people. Bryza noted that terms such as "lively debate, cacophony, and noise" were used to define politics in Turkey, maintaining that it was "a democratic requirement".

- Sadettin Ergec, the head of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF,) said

ANKARA 00000040 003 OF 003

the Kurdish peshmerge were preparing to attack the Turkmen in the oil-rich northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk.

- New Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has warned President Bush about proposing a troop increase in Iraq, saying Bush will not get "a blank check" for an open-ended commitment there.

- Saddam Hussein's Anfal trial, for the killing of 180,000 Kurds in the 1980s, resumed in Baghdad on Monday with the late dictator's seat empty.

- On Monday, the UN refugee agency UNHCR appealed for USD 60 million to help some half a million displaced Iraqis. By the end of the year the number is expected to reach 4.3 million people either living abroad or inside Iraq.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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